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Pine, George S.

A Tribute in memory of William Aldrich Dudley

[S.l.]

[1909]

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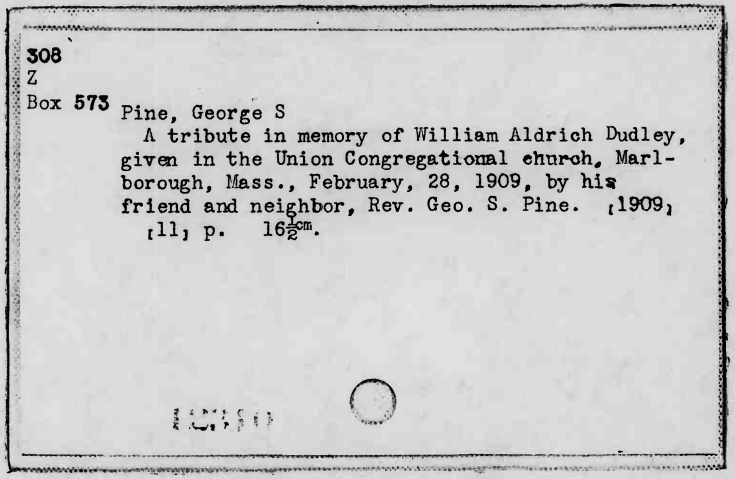

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Box 573 Pine, George S
A tribute in memory of William Aldrich Dudley, given in the Union Congregational church, Marlborough, Mass., February, 28, 1909, by his friend and neighbor, Rev. Geo. S. Pine. [1909] [11] p. 16½cm.

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A TRIBUTE

IN MEMORY OF

WILLIAM ALDRICH DUDLEY

GIVEN IN THE

UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

MARLBOROUGH, MASS.

FEBRUARY. 28, 1909.

By his friend and neighbor

REV. GEO. S. PINE

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PSALM XXXVII: 31.

"The Law of his God is in his heart;
None of his steps shall slide."

THIS is an aspect of a righteous man given us in a beautiful psalm. Other aspects are given there, but this one seems to me especially applicable to him, whose body is now in a coffin, whose voice is now silent, and whose face will be missed on our streets. "The law of his God is in his heart." Not on the sleeve, not in his mouth, but in his heart.

There was never any talk made about it, never any show in words, nothing pharisaic in phylacteries or otherwise in an outside kind of a way, but somehow or other, without cant speech on his part, or a sad countenance, or long prayers, one living near him for 18 years recognizes that the law of God was in his heart, and that this was in a large degree a righteous man, and that it was good to be with him.

It is not a matter of attaining this or that high position in life that we are here or there. It is not for acquiring so many thousand dollars to our credit in the banks, that we strive. It is not to have our names written large in the world's history that is our purpose in living. It is to have the law of God in our hearts.

It is not to have great fame that true artists paint, or that true poets write. It is because they have in them a power to express themselves in one line or another and they strive sincerely and well to have others know how they feel or what they think. I do not believe that, popular as they were in their day, Michel Angelo or Titian had any idea that they would be rated great in this our day. Nor do I think there was any selfconsciousness of greatness in what Dante or Shakespeare wrote for the edification or the pleasure of men of their day. They simply did well what they did do in expressing themselves in their respective lines of work, and we today still rate them great, greater even than they were rated in their own day.

So it was with Washington and Lincoln, about whom we have been hearing a great deal lately. They had firmly within them that which waited the occasion to express,—strong principles of truthfullness, honesty and straightforwardness. They acted always in accordance with those principles. Washington in the hour of his distress at Valley Forge praying by himself in the forest and Lincoln rushing miles into the country to right a mistake he had made, because the law of God was in their hearts, are pictures we like to think of. But I do not believe that either Washington or Lincoln, whether acting in affairs of state or in their own private affairs, according to the law of God within them, ever thought of the great name they would make for themselves in the history of our nation. There was not a bit of selfconsious striving for greatness about anything that they did. It was only a fighting for principle in the place that God put them, according to the Law of God that was in their heart and God made them great in our eyes, greater than any statesman we have had. If we think of them, and strive to emulate their example, it is not their greatness we expect to reach. It is not that at all, and yet what we strive for is worth just as much in the end to us as their greatness. It is to be as true to principle as they were true to principle. It is to have the law of God in our heart above everything else, and in spite of everything else. It is because of this that their example is worth so much to us, equal to that of any other men in history that we can name. It is not because of their world greatness that we value them, but because of their personal character.

So it was with St. Paul. He did not realize that he was to be the great apostle in our minds. It is not his greatness we emulate. It is his earnestness as a christian, it is his zeal as a missionary, that we try to have ours.

Now there are other persons in the world who haven't achieved greatness, whose names are not written in world histories or in Bibles, whom we have come in contact with as members of the same family, or of the same parish, as neighbors, as fellow workers or as fellow citizens, whose character is worth just as much to us as that of Washington's, or Lincoln's or perhaps as much as that of St. Paul, and that because we have known them personally, and have felt directly their influence. The law of God has been in their heart, and we somehow or other know it, though they say little or nothing about it. We are conscious they have been struggling against impulses that may be within and against evil and difficulties and troubles surely without them, according to this law of God, in whatever position in life God has put them, and that this law of God with them is paramount to everything else. They may not have made all out of themselves that they hoped for, or may not have expressed themselves as beautifully and as completely as they wished to do. They may not have achieved remarkable greatness in any special line. They have merely gone on their way evenly, day after day, step by step, without any rapid sliding ahead, or violent sliding backward and without any devious sliding to this side or that. It is such men that are the real power in the world. Very few of them become heads of armies, or presidents, or sovereigns, or even apostles, but they are a power for good in the world all the same, and we find them again and again, here and there in this town or the next as heads of families, if not in positions of trust, and we feel it was good to have been with them. We thank God that they lived, and that they lived with us, or near us.

Such a one in a large sense was William Aldrich Dudley, who came here nearly a quarter of a century ago. He had had a good schooling in Providence, had graduated at Amherst, where he entered heartily into sports as well as into study, had started in a business career and had married before he came here; and, what is very important for us to remember he had quite early made religion a part of his life, I believe, quietly and without any ostentation. It seems to me that it was just because the law of God was thus early in his heart that he was what he was. He never said much about it, but he lived in accordance to what was there through these years we have known him, lived as the honest and interested citizen, lived as the faithful husband, as the wise and affectionate father, the kindly neighbor, and the respected friend,—a man of wide vision and large sympathy,—the trusted treasurer of this parish (Union Congregational) for many years, and the last six years, the worthy auditor of this city, keeping its accounts in such a skilful way that any one could see clearly how the finances of the several departments stood at any time, winning thereby the confidence and esteem of the community. His good reputation,

which we honor, may not get beyond the city limits, or very far into the State. He may not be known at all in Texas or California. But what of that? He is known here, and here and wherever he has been his influence has been felt for good, and that is everything. He himself would shrink from praise and adulation. He did not seek for fame, but he did try to have the law of God in his heart. What we, who know him, wish is that there may be others elsewhere such as he was here, doing their duty officially and privately as well as he did his. We want more of such men here. We want men everywhere with the law of God in their hearts. They may not in spiritual pride reckon themselves good any more than truly great men ever count themselves great, but it is just such men that the world needs. It is such men that it is possible for us to be in our respective lines of work. There are too many men, even men great in science, great in art, great in politics, who haven't the law of God in their hearts at all. They may flourish for a while like the green bay tree, as the psalmist says, but by and by their place will nowhere be found. They have after all their apparent flourishing done no real good in the world. They slide into fame, and then shortly slide out of rememberance altogether. All men, however, who have the law of God in their hearts abide as a lasting good in the world, whether they be reckoned great or not, whether they be known only in one town or farther. Their influence can never be wiped out of the lives of those who knew them, nor out of the community in which they lived; and it is quite possible that it may be carried into the fartherest corners of the universe and into the fartherest reaches of time.

Though we sorrow, but not without hope of life still to be, that such a one dies, we rejoice more than sorrow that such a one lived, and lived right here among us, for we know that it has been for our good and the good of our town.

From the Marlboro' Enterprise, February 25, 1909

William A. Dudley, city auditor, passed away at his home, 245 East Main St., this Thursday morning at 4:30. Valvular heart disease was the cause of his death. He has been afflicted with the ailment for over six years and his condition was aggravated Dec. 25, 1907., when he suffered a shock. He became better and was able to resume his duties at the city hall, but his strength was seriously impaired and about a month ago, he was obliged to give up the idea of going to the city building, and since that time, his work has been done by another. His death was not unexpected.

William A. Dudley was one of the three children of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dudley of Providence and was born in that city Dec. 7, 1847 so that at the time of his death he was 61 years two months and 18 days old. He was graduated from the

Providence high school and attended Brown university and Amherst college, graduating from the latter institution in the class of 1870. While at college besides being a good student he was a great admirer of athletic sports. Baseball was his favorite pastime and when at Amherst he played on both his class and college nines.

After receiving his diploma Mr. Dudley went into business with his father, who was a member of the wholesale dry goods house of Dudley, Steere & Parkhurst, Providence. In 1886 he came to Marlboro to succeed Frank Hornby in the firm of Hornby & McKeon, owners of the Boston store. He retired from business in 1898 and went to Providence, where he became bookkeeper for the Allan Fire Department Supply Co., where he remained for four years.

In 1902 he was elected city auditor of Marlboro to succeed Geo. S. Haskell, who went to Chicago.

Mr. Dudley was prominent in the affairs of the Congregational church. When a young man, he united with the Pilgrim Congregational church, Providence, and served as treasurer of the church and librarian of the Sunday school. When he came to Marlboro, he became a member of the Union Congregational church and served as treasurer for several years, concluding his services in that capacity in January, when failing health made it appear advisable to surrender the position of trust to some one, whose physical condition was better able to bear its responsibilities.

Mr. Dudley was married to Miss Jennie L. Church, daughter of John and Fannie L. Church in November 1872. He is survived by his wife and the following seven children: Charles E., Providence, William C., Lansing, Mich., Miss Annie J., Cincinnati, Dr. Frank C. Dudley, Brooklyn, Walter W., assistant engineer of the steamer Bayview, Henry A., Cincinnati and Helen P., Marlboro. He also leaves a sister, Mrs. Edward F. Sibley, of Providence.

Mr. Dudley was a quiet and unassuming man with a desire to do unto others as he would that others should do unto him. This showed itself, when he was proprietor of the Boston store. The clerks in his employ of that time have never grown weary of extolling his virtues. His work at city hall brought him into contact with new faces and new work, but his unfailing courtesy made him highly regarded both as an official and a man. Mr. Dudley was a churchman who lived the life he professed. He was especially devoted to his family and their future appeared more to him than his own advancement. Whether he is considered as a citizen, official, a churchman, family man or neighbor, the world is better for his living.

His funeral will take place in the Union Congregational church, Sunday afternoon at 2:30. Burial at Swan Point cemetery, Providence, Monday.

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